

Message Text

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ACTION AF-06

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 NEA-10 IO-11 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00

PM-04 H-02 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01

SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 CU-02 OMB-01 SAM-01 /090 W

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R 040650Z FEB 76

FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT

TO SECSTATE WASHDC 5084

INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS

AMEMBASSY BAMAKO

AMEMBASSY DAKAR

AMEMBASSY MADRID

AMEMBASSY PARIS

AMEMBASSY RABAT

AMEMBASSY TRIPOLI

USMISSION NATO BRUSSELS

USMISSION USUN NY

USCINCEUR

CINCUSNAVEUR

FOSIF ROTA

COMSIXTHFLT

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 0275

E.O. 11652: XGDS(1)

TAGS: PFOR PBOR PINR SOPN MR AG SS

SUBJECT: SAHARA WATCH: MAURITANIAN DEVELOPMENTS AND RELATIONS
WITH ALGERIA

REF: NOUAKCHOTT 260

SUMMARY: MAURITANIAN RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA CONTINUE DOWNWARD
SPIRAL ALTHOUGH GIRM STILL HOPES THAT SEMBLANCE OF CORDIAL LINKS
CAN BE PRESERVED. MAURITANIAN MILITARY TRAINEES IN ALGERIA HAVE
BEEN CALLED BACK BUT MAURITANIAN STUDENTS ARE PROCEEDING WITH
THEIR STUDIES. NEW NATIONAL CIVIL AFFAIRS SERVICE WILL APPARENT-
LY BE DESIGNED TO PERFORM CIVILIAN FUNCTIONS IN SUPPORT OF MILI-
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TARY EFFORT. IT WILL ALSO SERVE AS VEHICLE TO GIRM POLITICAL

EDUCATION TO MAURITANIAN CADRES. END SUMMARY.

1. MAURITANIAN-ALGERIAN TIES: MOHAMED EL HANCHEI, DIRECTOR OF RESEARCH AND DOCUMENTATION IN OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT, REVIEWED STATUS OF ALGERIAN-MAURITANIAN RELATIONS WITH DCM AND VISITING INTERNATIONAL RELATIONS OFFICER FROM DAKAR ON FEBRUARY 3. EL HANCHEI SAID MAURITANIA LEARNED GOOD LESSON FROM HER OVERLY-CLOSE RELATIONSHIP WITH ALGERIA. RECALLING THAT MAURITANIA SLAVISHLY SUPPORTED ALGERIAN POSITION IN INTERNATIONAL FORA AND INTRODUCED ALGERIAN PERSONNEL INTO MANY SECTORS OF ACTIVITY IN COUNTRY, HE CONCLUDED THIS HAD BEEN BIG MISTAKE. HE ARGUED THAT NEVER AGAIN WOULD MAURITANIA ALLOW ITSELF TO BECOME SO CLOSE TO ANY COUNTRY. HE NOTED THAT SIX MONTHS AGO THERE WERE MORE THAN 100 ALGERIANS WORKING IN VARIOUS CAPACITIES IN COUNTRY. TODAY, HE SUGGESTED, THERE ARE MAXIMUM OF FORTY. HE ADDED THAT ALTHOUGH TIES WITH ALGERIA HAVE DETERIORATED SHARPLY, GIRM STILL HOPES, PERHAPS WISHFULLY, TO MAINTAIN SEMBLANCE TO REASONABLE RELATIONSHIP WITH ALGERIA. EL HANCHEI POINTED OUT THAT SOME 100 MAURITANIAN STUDENTS CONTINUE TO STUDY IN ALGERIA IN SPITE OF DIFFICULTIES POSED BY CURRENT SITUATION. GIRM PRESENTLY HAS NO INTENTION TO CALL THESE STUDENTS BACK TO MAURITANIA. ON OTHER HAND, GIRM HAS TOLD ALL ITS MILITARY PERSONNEL WHO WERE UNDERGOING TRAINING IN ALGERIA TO RETURN TO MAURITANIA.

2. NATIONAL CIVIL AFFAIRS SERVICE: EL HANCHEI ELABORATED ON PURPOSE OF NEW NATIONAL CIVIL AFFAIRS SERVICE MENTIONED REFTEL. HE EMPHASIZED THAT GUIDELINES HAVE NOT YET BEEN DRAWN UP BY NATIONAL POLITICAL BUREAU (BPN) ALTHOUGH IT HAS BEEN DECIDED TO PLACE ORGANIZATION UNDER GENERAL CONTROL OF PARTY. HE THOUGHT STRUCTURE WOULD BE FAIRLY LOOSE AND SAID UNIT WILL HAVE TWO MAJOR ROLLS: (A) TO SERVE AS VEHICLE FOR POLITICAL EDUCATION OF CITIZENRY, PARTICULARLY AS CONCERNS MAURITANIAN POLICY ON SAHARA QUESTION. EFFORT WILL BE MADE TO RAISE POLITICAL CONSCIOUSNESS OF MAURITANIANS. HE CITED PROPAGANDA COUP SCORED BY RADIO ALGIERS

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BROADCAST JANUARY 26 WHICH STATED THAT RIOTS TOOK PLACE RECENTLY IN 5TH DISTRICT OF NOUAKCHOTT (NOUAKCHOTT 215). EL HANCHEI SAID ALLEGATION WAS TOTALLY UNTRUE, BUT ADDED THAT GIRM WAS NOT PREPARED IN ORGANIZATIONAL SENSE TO DEAL ADEQUATELY WITH CHARGE. (DAKAR EMBOFF NOTED FOR EXAMPLE, THAT SENEGALESE OFFICIAL HAD ASSERTED TO HIM SEVERAL DAYS AGO BELIEF DESPITE FORMAL GIRM DENIAL THAT REPORT WAS TRUE.)

CREATION OF NATIONAL CIVIL AFFAIRS SERVICE AND CONCOMITANT MOB-

ILIZATION OF MAURITANIAN INFORMATION MEDIA IS PART OF GIRM EFFORT TO DEAL MORE EFFECTIVELY WITH THIS KIND OF ALLEGATION IN FUTURE. IT WAS APPARENT FROM EL HANCHEI'S REMARKS THAT THIS PARTICULAR CHARGE, COMING AS IT DID FROM MAURITANIA'S "ALGERIAN BROTHERS", STRUCK EXTREMELY SENSITIVE NERVE.

(B) TO SERVE AS CIVIC ACTION ORGANIZATION. NATIONAL CIVIL AFFAIRS SERVICE MIGHT BE ORGANIZED, EL HANCHEI EXPLAINED, TO HELP BUILD ROADS FOR EITHER CIVILIAN OR MILITARY PURPOSES. SHOULD MAURITANIA BE ATTACKED (BY ALGERIA), NEW ORGANIZATION COULD BE USED TO CARE FOR WOUNDED, PAIR DAMAGED STRUCTURES, AND EXTINGUISH FIRES CAUSED BY FIGHTING. IT WAS APPARENT THAT CONSIDERABLE REFINING REMAINS TO BE DONE BEFORE THIS ASPECT OF NATIONAL CIVIL AFFAIRS SERVICE BECOMES OPERATIONAL. IT APPEARS, HOWEVER, THAT NEW ORGANIZATION IS NOT INTENDED TO SERVE MILITARY FUNCTIONS PER SE, BUT RATHER IS DESIGNED TO PERFORM CIVILIAN ACTIVITIES IN SUPPORT OF MILITARY GOALS.

3. ADMINISTRATIVE ACTIVITY IN WADI DHEHAB: MAURITANIAN DIRECTOR OF TELECOMMUNICATIONS TOLD EMBOFF FEBRUARY 2 THAT GIRM HAS NOT YET ESTABLISHED DIRECT TELECOMMUNICATIONS LINK BETWEEN MAURITANIA AND DAKHLA IN WADI DHEHAB. HE SAID THAT SUCH A LINK IS PLANNED, HOWEVER, AND MAY BE COMPLETED IN NEXT SEVERAL WEEKS. IN MEANTIME, TELECOMMUNICATIONS GO FROM NOUAKCHOTT TO LAS PALMAS TO EL AAIUN. MAURITANIAN OFFICER IN CHARGE OF WATER RESOURCES LED MISSION TO DAKHLA LAST WEEK IN ORDER TO CONDUCT STUDY PRIOR TO ESTABLISHING WATER SUPPLY SERVICE IN REGION.HANDYSIDE

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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: X
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: FOREIGN RELATIONS, CONSCRIPTION, PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION, STUDENTS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 04 FEB 1976
Decaption Date: 01 JAN 1960
Decaption Note:
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: ShawDG
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1976NOUAKC00275
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: X1
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D760043-0391
From: NOUAKCHOTT
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1976/newtext/t19760283/aaaacuzc.tel
Line Count: 145
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION AF
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: n/a
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Reference: 76 NOUAKCHOTT 260
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: ShawDG
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 MAR 2004
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 MAR 2004 by greeneet>; APPROVED <29 JUL 2004 by ShawDG>
Review Markings:

Margaret P. Grafeld
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
04 MAY 2006

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: SAHARA WATCH: MAURITANIAN DEVELOPMENTS AND RELATIONS WITH ALGERIA
TAGS: PFOR, PBOR, PINR, SOPN, MR, AG, SS
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Margaret P. Grafeld Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 04 MAY 2006